

Introduction

In the history of this East, the candle of the Prophetic missions, there was no one like Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, in piety, devotion and intense turning to Allah in repentance except his grandfather, who illuminated the intellectual life with the light of monotheism and true belief.

The life of this great Imam has given an account of the lives of the prophets and the messengers. He was similar to them in all their qualities and trends. Hence he was like Jesus Christ in his asceticism and his turning to Allah in repentance. He was like prophet Job in his tribulation and his patience. He was similar to prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, in his true resolution and his good manners. His good tendencies and his spiritual abilities are limitless. In the history of this world, it is enough for him that only he has been called Zayn al-‘Abidin. This nick-name has been not given to anyone except him.

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, appeared on the arena of the Islamic life as the most brilliant Muslim politician whom history has ever known. He was ill and captured by the Umayyads, yet spread with his outstanding merits the objectives of the revolution of his father, Imam al- Husayn. The latter was the leader who inspired the victorious Islamic movement. Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin showed the original values of the revolution in a brilliant manner full of rationing, originality, and creation.

This great Imam indicated the general thought. He removed the social deception which the community suffered during the days of the black Umayyad regime which intended to paralyze the revolutionary Islamic movement. This regime turned the Muslims into scattering groups without life and feelings. This Imam faced the Umayyad policy with his ideas, where he destroyed their claimed victory and the marks of their haughtiness and might. The Imam, peace be on him, achieved these glorious victories through the wonderful enthusiastic sermons which he delivered before the great masses in Kufa, Damascus, and Medina. These sermons played an important role in enlightening the community and liberating it from the factors of fear and terrorism.

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, was the strongest factor in immortalizing the Husaynid revolution and making it react upon the sentiments and feelings of the community. That was through his wonderful qualities of which history has never known in the world of bravery and heroism. Among these

qualities was that he was taken prisoner by bin Marjana ('Ubayd Allah bin Zyyad) one of the worst terrorists on earth. However, the Imam disdained and reproached him for the great many murder and sins he committed. The tyrant ('Ubayd Allah) threatened him with death. The Imam was in different to him. He aimed penetrating arrows at 'Ubayd Allah's heart through his eloquent words. The Imam's conversation with him had great influence upon the official and the non-official circles at that time. The Imam went on shedding light upon the objectives of the Husaynid revolution. Thus, he could proclaim these objectives throughout history.

As for the Imam's speech in Yazid's palace, it was among the most wonderful documents in Islam. I (i. e. the author) think that there was no political speech more eloquent and influential in educating the masses and enlightening the public opinion than that of the Imam. Through this speech, the Imam confused. So the latter was unable to defend himself or to justify his crime when he killed the master of the youths of Paradise (i. e. Imam Husayn) and destroyed the pure family (of the Prophet). For this reason the people talked with admiration about the Imam's speech that was among the results of the Husaynid uprising and its bright stages.

Among the ways through which the Imam immortalized the Husaynid revolution was that he wept very much over the tragedies which befell his father, the members of his House, and his companions at the Battle of Karbala. Indeed the Imam deprived himself of happiness and pleasure. He was overcome with sadness. Thus, he was regarded as among the five tearful persons who represented sorrow throughout history.

I (i. e. the author) think that the Imam wept very much, not because of the great misfortune and the serious adversities which resulted from the tragedies of Karbala. Rather he wept in order to immortalize the revolution which his father led to liberate man from oppression, slavery, and tyranny. His weeping over his father created sorrow in the hearts of the Muslims. Perhaps this phenomenon (of weeping) was among the factors that the Muslim masses used to fight against the Umayyad regime. The first spark started in Medina. The children of the Companions (of the Prophet) declared their armed mutiny against Yazid's government, who had disdained the values of the community and its fates.

After the tragedy of Karbala, the great Imam, Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, devoted himself to teaching. This is because he thought that spreading knowledge would be the best way to carry out his reformatory message. Besides he thought that it would be the best way to relieve his soul which the tragedies of Karbala melted. Accordingly, the children of the Companions (of the Prophet), the religious scholars, and the jurists hurried to benefit from his sea of knowledge. The Imam began teaching them, and they became teachers in the Islamic world. In this book will illustrate their biographies.

The Imam enlightened the Arab and the Islamic thought with various kinds of knowledge. He summoned and urged the Muslim youths to give importance to knowledge. His students lauded and praised his summons to knowledge. His grandfather, the great Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, planted a tree of knowledge, which grew through his (the Imam's) blessings. So the people were eager to seek

knowledge. Hence, the Imam was the brilliant founder of an intellectual culture in the Islamic world.

As for the scientific and cultural wealth of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, it represented creation, liberty, and development. This wealth was not confined to a particular science. Rather it included many sciences such as jurisprudence, explanation of the Qur’an, theology, philosophy, education, sociology, and the like. The Imam devoted much attention to ethics because he thought that Islamic ethics was liable to collapse. He thought that the people turned away from their religion.

This is because the Umayyad regime intended to destroy all moral values. So the Imam, peace be on him, spared no effort to reform and educate the community. Concerning the Imam, the Shi‘ites said: “When the people yielded to their desires and followed their kings, the Imam cured them with the moral teachings and the holy verses.”^{[1](#)}

The Imam, peace be on him, treated moral and educational matters objectively and inclusively. His studies in this respect are among the most valuable Islamic studies and the most accurate.

Perhaps the most beautiful and the most productive tool used in developing the Islamic thought is his great supplications called al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya’. The scholars sometimes call it ‘Zabu’r Al Muhammad’, and they sometimes call it ‘Injil Al Muhammad’, may Allah bless him and his family. They regard it as the third important reference after the Qur’an and Nahj al-Balagha. Indeed, it is an ideal Islamic program containing moral values and social rules.

It is worth mentioning that al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya has occupied an important position in the Islamic intellectual circles, where they devoted themselves to study and explain it. The scholars have compiled more than sixty-five commentaries on al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya.^{[2](#)} They even wrote copies of it in beautiful script which is regarded as among the precious Arabic script. Moreover, some copies have been embellished with precious Arabesque.

We will continue our discussion about al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya’. We say: Its importance is not confined to the Arab and Islamic world, rather its importance has extended to the Western world. It has been translated into English, German, French, and the like. The scholars and people of those nations have devoted themselves to study and ponder its contents carefully. In it they have found a treasure of thought and knowledge. They have also found that it contains moral teachings necessary to educate soul. Indeed, it has added incomparable wealth to the references of the human thought. It also contains various kinds of high culture which is rarely found in moral and religious books. Besides it is the most important reference in our study on the character of the Imam, peace be on him.

As for the ideas of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, and his psychological elements, they bewilder intellects. They move every Muslim and every person who adopts his humanity and yields to its ideals and values to admire the Imam and boast of him.

This Imam was endowed with all good manners. He was adorned with all virtues and honor. He freed

himself from all selfishness, and turned away from all the vanities and pleasures of life. Among his prominent qualities was that he turned to Allah in repentance and devoted himself to Him. His love for Allah and his fear of him controlled his intellect, his heart, and his body. His soul shone through the light of conviction in Allah. His heart was full of hope of Allah's mercy. The historians unanimously agreed that he overexerted himself to worship and obey Allah.

The people of his time did not see anyone who worshipped Allah more than he did. Nor did they see a person who was more pious than he was. Because of his abundant worshipping, he was called the Lord of worshipers and Imam of the pious.

His family felt pity for him because of his abundant worshipping. They were concerned about him because of tiredness and the hardships from which he suffered. Hence, they went quickly to the great Companion (of the Prophet), Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, whom the Imam preferred to the others. They asked Jabir to beg the Imam not to overexert himself in worshipping. Jabir then talked to him and begged him to do that. Some of the words which he said to him are: "You are one of the successors of the Prophet. You are the representative of Allah on the earth. You are among those through whom tribulations are driven away." However, the Imam went on worshipping Allah and adhering to obedience. So Jabir said with admiration: "None of the children of the prophets was like 'Ali b. al-Husayn (i.e. Zayn al-'Abidin)."

Indeed no one of the children of the prophets was like 'Ali b. al-Husayn in asceticism, piety, and intense turning to Allah in repentance.

Another phenomenon of the high ideals by which the Imam, peace be on him, was distinguished was that he treated the slaves kindly. He pitied for them very much. Among what he intended to do during his lifetime was that he wanted to free them from slavery. Indeed, he freed a large group of them. If he had lived for a longer time, he would have freed all the slaves. This is because he wanted to abolish slavery and to make the Muslims know that their religion came to liberate man from abasement and slavery.

It is an act of truthfulness to say that this great inspired Imam was not confined to a certain group of people nor was he confined to a certain set of Muslims. Rather he was for all people in spite of their different ideas throughout history. This is because the Imam represented human moral values and dignity. Besides he represented what man usually prides himself on, such as perfection, the rules of conduct, and excellent morals.

Because of the Imam's high character and his great importance to the Muslims, many Muslim sects claimed that he belonged to them. For example, the Mu'tazilites, who were the most knowledgeable of all the Muslims in theology, regarded him with pride and honor as one of them.³ The Sufis claimed that he was among their great figures. As a result, they have written about his life in their encyclopedias.⁴

The Muslims thought that the life of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was the true embodiment of the Islamic values and high noble traits of his grandfather, the great Prophet, may Allah bless him and

his family. He followed his method, his life, and his practices. Hence, the Imam possessed the heart and the feelings through his excellent morals. So the people thought that no one except the Imam was worthy of their temporal and spiritual leadership. For this reason they disdained their Umayyad kings who were void of virtues. The event which took place in the Kaaba during the time of the pilgrimage indicates this. The Kaaba was full of people from everywhere. The Imam came to circumambulate the Kaaba, and it was as if that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, came to them. So they said loudly: "There is no Allah but Allah ! Allah is great !" They crowded around him as they crowded around the Black Stone. Happy was he who touched his clothes or kissed his hand or took some dust from under his feet to see a good omen in it.

In the meantime his opponent, Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik, who was chief of the Umayyad family was among the pilgrims. However, no one paid attention to him. The Syrians hurried to ask him about this great man (i. e. the Imam) whom the people welcomed so warmly. However, the tyrant (i.e. Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik) denied knowing anything about him. He was afraid that the Syrians would renounce him. The poet of the Umayyad royal palace, al-Farazdaq, opposed him. He then made the people aware the Imam through his immortal and wonderful poem which represented clear thought and conscience. The Kaaba then turned into the market of 'Ukaz (the place where the Arabs recited their poems). From all sides of the mosque, the people repeated loudly the wonderful poem of al-Farazdaq and invoked Allah for the Imam. As a result, Hisham was full of anger.

The Umayyads felt that they were not from the community and that they were not worthy of leading it. Rather they imposed their government on it as a weapon. They knew that 'Ali b. al-Husayn was the real leader, so they bore malice against him. Al-Walid indicated that when he said: "I cannot rest as long as 'Ali b. al-Husayn is in the world."⁵ They tried to kill him as they had killed the Muslim Imams and the great figures before, because they thought that such figures were dangerous.

It is necessary for us to study the period during which the Imam, peace be on him, lived. This is because studying a certain period has become among methodical affairs which are necessary for the researcher. Such a study represents political tranquillity and disorder. Moreover, it gives a clear picture about social aspects such as creation, progress, stagnancy, decline, and the like. It is natural for us to study this phenomenon to discover the qualities of the Imam.

As for the time of the Imam, peace be on him, I (the author) think that it was the worst time in history. This is because many great events occurred during that time. These events befell the Muslims and caused troubles to them. The most painful one of them was the tragedy of Karbala. It was the most painful of all the world events. The holiness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was violated during that tragedy. That was when the people attacked his womenfolk and killed his grandsons. They did pay attention his Holiness concerning them. The Imam, peace be on him, witnessed with great sorrow all the tragedies, which are immortal in the world of grief. Hence, he remembered them at every hour of his life till he joined the Most High Associate (Allah).

Among the sorrowful events from which the Imam, peace be on him, suffered was the Battle of al- Hirra. The Holiness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was violated at it in his city and the center of his mission. The policemen of Yazid b. Mu'awiya desecrated Medina. In it they committed all what Allah forbade. They destroyed all values and customs. The revolt of the Repentant and the revolt of the great inspired leader, al-Mukhtar b. Yousif, occurred during the time of the Imam, peace be on him.

These revolts, which we will discuss in this book, resulted from the revolution of the Lord of the martyrs, Imam Husayn, peace be on him. Among the prominent events at that time was the revolt of b. al-Zubayr. This revolt resulted from some political ambitions. I (the author) think that b. al-Zubayr did not intend to free the community from the Umayyads and to save it from their violence. Rather he revolted against them to take the reins of government. Moreover, such a man did not take care of the interests of the community nor did he take care of its independence and its dignity.

There was another difficulty during the time of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him. The difficulty was that the political parties fought against each other to take the reins of government. As a result, they filled the country with tribulations and disasters. Surely, the political parties at that time did not intend to achieve any of the community's objectives nor did they strive to solve any of its fateful affairs. Rather they strove to achieve their ambitions and their material interests.

Among the most prominent parties was the Umayyad party, which the government supported with all its abilities. The Umayyad party included the leaders and the luxurious class of the country. Among those parties was the party of b. al-Zubayr. Many people from Hijaz (Saudi Arabia) joined this party. Their aim was to return the Islamic capital to their country and to take the reins of government. Among those parties was the Kharijites. This party was strong. It was indignant with the Quraysh, for the government was confined to them. However, this party was afflicted by ideological dullness and decline. This is because it mixed the affairs, and followed dangerous ways of error. It believed in such ways because of stupidity and ignorance. An example of its stupidity was that it showed enmity towards the Commander of the faithful (Imam 'Ali), who was the pioneer of the truth and social justice in the earth. This party regarded shedding the blood of those who did not believe in its ideas as lawful. We will discuss this party when we talk about the political life during the time of the Imam.

Among the important events during the time of the Imam, peace be on him, was that the Umayyad government forced the people to curse the Commander of the faithful (Imam 'Ali), peace be on him, and the pure family (of the Prophet). So the people cursed them on the pulpits, in the minarets (of the mosques), and after Friday sermons. Hence showing enmity toward them was part of the religious life of the Muslims. The Umayyad regime followed the Shi'ites (followers) of the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, punished and killed them. The Shi'ites during the Umayyad regime were liable to very intense tribulations. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, witnessed this. However, he was unable to protect his Shi'ites from the Umayyad regime. As a result, his heart was full of pain and sorrow.

It is necessary for me to give a clear picture about the policy of the kings who ruled the community during the time of the Imam, peace be on him. In addition, I must mention their politico – ideological trends, and what the Imam, peace be on him, suffered because of them. This is because I think that such matters will complete the study about the great character of the Imam, peace be on him.

When I mention the affairs of those kings, I will not become fanatic nor will I be partial to any side nor will I be severe towards any party. Rather I will present the sorrowful events of each party. This is because such events have put them before the trial of history. It is natural that to regard them as right and to justify their deeds means turning away from reason, mutiny against the proofs, remoteness from correctness, and deviation from the truth.

As for our study in this book, it has been based on the most reliable handwritten, photographed, and printed references, which are the sources of historians and narrators. Worth mentioning, I have quoted the events from many books in order to support my purpose. I did my best to review the handwritten and the photographed references from which I have quoted these topics.

In the footnotes of the book, I have mentioned the libraries where these references are found.

At the end of this introduction, I surely declare that this book contains only few things about the life of this great Imam who filled the world with virtues and knowledge. I have read ethics books, tradition books, commentaries, jurisprudence books, and other Islamic books. I have found that these books have mentioned the valuable works of the Imam, his original ideas, his interesting sayings, and so on. Therefore this book, though comprehensive, is a brief page about his life or a faint point about the features of his life and character.

I (the author) have repeated the same words in the introductions of the books which I have written on the lives of the pure Imams. That is, Allah knows, not because of the very intense love for them nor is it because of the sentiment of my grandfathers who followed the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them. Rather, this has resulted from serious studies about their lives. Whoever studies their lives believes that the Imams, peace be on them, represented the lives of the prophets.

It is necessary for me to say that these studies about the lives of the pure Imams, peace be on them, are very important, because we live at the time when people have become ignorant of these Imams. In other words humanity has deviated from the laws of the cosmos which Allah has created. Therefore people are liable to tyranny, persecution, aggression, threat, and causing homelessness.

Indeed people are restless and perplexed. They are Absorbed in material pleasures and dreadful wars. Their hearts are empty of belief. Therefore, they are in need of the guidance of the pure family (of the Prophet), who were Allah's favor for people, and like their grandfather, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, whom Allah sent for people whether they believed in him or not.

Now, I want to end this introduction, but I think that it is an act of truthfulness to acknowledge the

creative efforts my brother, shaykh Hadi Sharif al-Qarashi, made in writing this book. He suffered many troubles when he read some of the encyclopedias. Besides he gave me many valuable notes during writing these studies. I am, Allah knows, unable to thank this loyal brother. However, I leave that to Allah, the Most High, to reward him as He rewards His sincere servants.

Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi,

Holy Najaf

- [1.](#) Nazariyat al-Imama, p.350.
- [2.](#) Al-Dhari'a fi Tasanif al-Shi'a.
- [3.](#) Tabaqat al-Mu'tazila, pp. 15–16.
- [4.](#) Hulyat al-Awliya', vol. 3, p. 172.
- [5.](#) Hayat al-Imam Mohammed al-Baqir, vol. 1, p.51.

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